



(Photo: Pike County; Russ Adams)

FALL COLOR REPORT 11/03/16

Northwest

Quad Cities area – Rock Island, Henry, Bureau, Stark, Mercer, and Knox Counties: Most walnut, cottonwood, elm, black cherry and honey locust have lost their leaves. Yellowish green is still, overall, the dominant color. Occasionally, you can still spot some red maple and the pinkish purple of white ash. Sugar maples are holding on to yellow and yellowish-orange leaves. Hickory trees have the most brilliant yellow, but are starting to brown. Swamp white oaks are turning yellow and tan. Black oaks, in general, are turning yellow and brown; white oaks are getting a pinkish purple tint; 5 to 10% of pin oak leaves are turning a reddish brown; red oaks are unpredictable. One of the most urban shrubs, burning bush, is still maintaining a lot of dark scarlet color. Roadsides have gotten fairly dull with many shrubs losing leaves or turning grayish brown.

Northeast

It looks like peak has come and gone in McHenry County. Oaks are still brown, yellow and red. A few high wind events took care of a lot of leaves, but they are still out there if you want to see them.

In the Grundy County, wooded areas are still at a waning peak. Oaks and hickories are reds and browns but are losing leaves. Vines and sumac are falling. Maples (both soft and hard) are turned and falling. Cottonwoods, elms, and walnuts are all bare. In urban areas, street maples are at full color and beginning to fall. Honey locusts are turning yellow. Burning bushes and other shrubs are at full color. Some pears have not yet changed and will show color for another week. Mild weather has been a drag on timing of the fall change, and colors seem not as brilliant.

West Central

Some places in McDonough County are at peak this week, and some are past peak. Recent winds have brought down many leaves. Color at Argyle Lake State Park is still good. Just a short distance to the southeast, the woods are in full color and at their peak. Most of the oaks have now turned shades of red, yellow and brown. The majority of the maples have turned, some are still brilliant yellow/orange and some have already dropped their leaves.

Central

Fall color has reached the peak at Starved Rock State Park. Views are best from overlooks such as Starved Rock and Lover's Leap.

Colors in the Illinois River Valley in the Starved Rock area have peaked. However, with the absence of a hard frost, there are a lot of understory sugar maple with nice yellow to orange tinted foliage still present. Some bitternut hickory is very bright yellow, but most of the common shagbark hickory is yellowish brown to brown. In general, the oaks have not had a lot of the pink and red to deep red tint this year, with them yellowing or going light green to brown. There are exceptions to this, and they do stand out in the landscape with their brighter color. Common milkweed plants have turned ghostly gray and the seed has almost all floated away from the open pods. Little bluestem prairie grass is turning dark reddish brown rapidly and is easily seen as it is a bunch grass often standing in individual clumps. The sumacs are still giving very nice colors from oranges to deep reds. The urban and suburban landscapes still have a lot of trees in great color. Nursery varieties of many species that have been selected for showy fall color are really standing out. Burning bush is one that never seems to disappoint with its red colors. Autumn blaze maple and many similar maple varieties are still going strong. With the remaining harvest coming out and the weather still unseasonably warm, removal of the remaining standing crops is causing the wildlife to have to take refuge in other places. Watch for deer, coyotes, pheasants, and other mammals like opossums, skunks, and raccoons moving across roadways. Slow down cautiously for flocks of turkeys, and enjoy a chance to see them up close.

There are still some good peak colors (reds, orange and yellow) showing throughout Mason County, though recent windy weather brought down a lot of leaves.

East-Central

The sugar maples continue to show good fall color with yellow and orange in Coles County. Most hickory have displayed their fall foliage and are now brown, with a few exceptions still showing mainly orange and yellow, with areas of bright yellow coming from the bitternut hickories. Most of the oaks have finally started to show their colors, with many of the true white oaks showing a scarlet red, with some seen as yellow/orange. Most of the red oak, black oak and pin oak are showing good fall color with displays of brick red, bronze to golden yellow.

South

The fall colors are beginning to peak from the I-57 & I-70 junction in Marion County and south. Hickories have mostly turned, showing yellow, but most are bronze to brown and beginning to drop. Sassafras is still showing deep reds, but they are losing many leaves with recent windy weather. Persimmons have all but dropped every leaf, but hold some orange fruits that contrast well on the forest edges. Sugar maples have mostly all turned, with most showing yellow with some orange and orange/reds coming through. Black oaks are turning yellowish orange, but do not show exceptional color thus far as some are quickly going to brown. White oaks have begun to turn to a dark red color, but this change seems to be lacking thus far, presumably due to the unseasonably warm temperatures.

The leaves continue to drop in Clinton County. However, the sassafras are about done with their fall colors and the sumac are still holding on to some red leaves. The sweet gum are turning yellow and some red in parts of the crowns; the red maples are turning more red in their crowns. The sugar maple and hickory are turning more yellow in their crowns.

Warm temperatures and no frost yet in Southern Illinois has leaves continuing to change while hanging on. The I-64 corridor from Mt. Vernon to Grayville is real eye candy for leaf peepers this week. The sweetgums in the bottomland forests are now bright yellow, and the oaks are showing beautiful bronze highlights. There are also red highlights mixed in. Sassafras just keeps getting better, and some of them look like hunter blaze orange now. Sugar maples in this part of Illinois are now changing to yellow and orange, and many of the sweetgums are red or purple. Blackgums are now scarlet, and are hanging onto their leaves longer than is usual for that species. Get out and enjoy it while you can. A little frost and a little rain and it will all be over (for fall color)!

The fall colors are still looking great in Union County area. There is a great deal of yellow/orange/red in the woods. The maples, sycamore, tulip poplar, sumacs, and others have turned and are dropping leaves, but some are still hanging on. The oaks are changing as well displaying yellow, gold, and red colors. The colors are still really beautiful and it is worth going outdoors to see them before they are gone!!

At Fort Massac State Park in southern Illinois, there are a lot of oranges and yellows as trees are starting to lose their leaves on windy days (but still look beautiful).

Fall is making an appearance in color if not temperatures at Cache River State Natural Area. Maples, hickory, hazelnuts, bald cypress, and water tupelo are turning quickly. Several species of oaks are slowly turning (still a lot of trees with mainly green leaves). Leaves on some trees are turning color, then falling off.

Leaves are close to fall peak in Randolph County. The hickories have all turned yellow and browns, most of the oaks are either in full color or half color/half green. Sugar maples are peaking with pastel pinks, reds and yellows. Everything else is pretty much in full color, but windy weather is knocking leaves off the trees.

FAQ's

Why do the leaves change color?

As autumn begins, days get shorter and this signals the tree to go dormant. There is not enough light or water in the winter for trees to photosynthesize (make food) so they shed their leaves and rest. The first step in dormancy is shutting down the food making factories in the leaves, green chlorophyll, and when green chlorophyll breaks down it exposes other colors in the leaves like yellows and reds that we could not previously see.

What causes some leaves to be red and some to be yellow?

The yellows and reds that are unmasked when green chlorophyll breaks down are pigments called carotenoids (yellow pigment that gives corn and carrots their color) and anthocyanins (red pigments that give blueberries and strawberries their color).

Species and color expectations

Oak –red-orange

Hickory – golden bronze

Sugar maple – orange-red

Black maple – glowing yellow

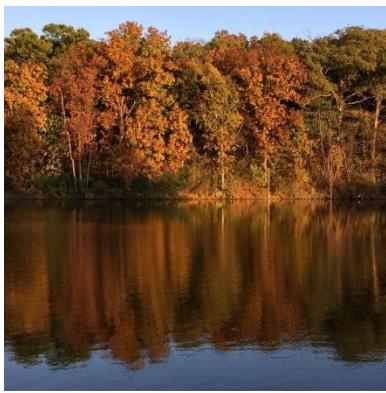
Aspen – golden yellow

Tulip poplar – golden yellow

Dogwood – purplish red

Sumac – bright red

Virginia creeper – flaming red



(Photo: Chris Young)